

Translator's note: The following is the translated Book 7 from Melchior Cano's *De Locis Theologicis*. In this book, he concerns himself with the source of theology from the saints. I have often translated 'ancient saint' or 'ancient author' as 'father,' despite the fact that Cano almost never uses 'pater' or a form thereof when describing the ancients. This seems to me to be the best choice, since in these places, Cano is talking about the ancient saints and their consensus, commonly called the consensus of the *fathers* by more recent theologians. Thus, it is fitting for the modern reader and not entirely anachronistic. I have also translated Cano's various references to the Bible as 'the sacred Scriptures' in almost every instance, since I am fearful that his similar (though clearly distinct) vocabulary about the writings of the uninspired saints may be confusing.

I have also extended certain quotes from the fathers which I feel may give the reader more information into the context of the passage being quoted, most notably in Vincent of Lerins and Augustine. All of the quotes from the Bible appear as they do in Cano with the 1899 Douay-Rheims translation. Though this does make some of the quotations feel a little bit more archaic, I believe the meaning to be held in all circumstances. I will apologize in advance for poor word choice and the occasional interpretation in transcribing the text. I have no doubt that there are some errors or places in which I may have made the text less readable than it could be. For this, I hope the reader will give me a touch of grace and read on nonetheless.

KEEP THE FAITH.

- William

## BOOK 7

### CHAPTER 1

We now move to establish the sixth source of theology, namely the authority of the saints, which the heretics, especially the Lutherans, endeavor to cast down.

They do this by use of several arguments. The first argument is the following: whatever the ancient saints assert, the testimonies of Augustine are clear on this matter, known to all in Gratian's *Decretum*, Distinction 9, canons 3, 4, 5, 9, 10, and 11 (from the third book of *De Trinitate*, from the fourth book of *De Anima et eius Origine contra Vincentium Victorem*, from the 19th epistle to Jerome, from the 7th epistle to Marcellus, from the 48th epistle to Vincentium, and also from the third epistle to Fortuna, and lastly from *De baptismo contra Donatistas*, book 2, chapter 3).

In all these passages, Augustine says the same thing, that is, apart from the sacred authors who wrote the sacred Scriptures, all the others should be read in such a way as if they were strong in all holiness and learning, but we should not think it true what they have asserted simply because they said so. Rather, we should believe them in so far as they were able to convince us either by the testimony of sacred authors of Scripture, or by probable reason. Therefore, it is permissible for us to feel contrary to them, and, while saving the honor due to these men, to disapprove and reject anything in their writings.

And the Lutherans reason that, if we believe that this testimony of St. Augustine, so constant and not obscurely repeated in many places, is true, we must admit that no firm argument at all can be taken from the holy fathers to corroborate the dogmas of theology/faith.

This is confirmed by Saint Thomas Aquinas (who cites the authority of St. Augustine on this matter) in ST.I.Q1.A8.Rep2.2 when he says, "sacred doctrine uses the authority of the canonical Scriptures as an incontrovertible proof, and the authority of the doctors of the Church as one that may properly be used, yet merely as probable." And he also adds the cause of this matter, because our faith rests in the revelation made to those who wrote the canonical books, not in the revelation, if any, made to other teachers.

So the adversaries say that if these two most famous witnesses, Augustine with St. Thomas Aquinas, are rejected and spurned, certainly we can find some reasons not condemned by others to prove this. So, they reason that if any single falsity were to be found in the canonical book, as we argued above, the certainty of the whole book would perish. When, therefore, we allow that someone may find some falsehood in the books of the holy writers [fathers] which pertain to

fact, or even in those things which pertain to faith, it follows that it is not necessary to have a certain faith in those writers. As Jerome says in his 82nd epistle, “it is one thing for me to have the apostles, another thing entirely for the rest of the commentators. The former always tells the truth, the latter sometimes leads people astray.”

Moreover, the adversaries wish to posit something more to ensure that this matter has been sufficiently investigated beyond further debate. They claim that the holy writers, if most of them agree in the same opinion, might show grounds for a matter of faith which is probable, but not certain.

They claim that most of the fathers assert that all the parts of this world were not created in the same day, but rather at several periods of time, the world first being spread out, then decorated, then finished. Certainly Basil asserts as much in *Homilia 2 Hexameron*, Eusebius in the beginning of his *Chronicles*, Chrysostom in his second Homily on Genesis, Damasus in his second book on the Faith, Ambrose in the first book, chapter 7 of his *Hexameron*, Gregory the Great in the 32nd book of his *Morals*, Chapter 10. Also in the *Sentences*, Book II, Distinctions 12 and 13, where Jerome is cited. Such can also be found in Bede and many others who offer an opinion of consensus, which would have the first chapter of Genesis in error, since they understood creation in six successive days.

This common consent of the Saints evidently furnishes no certain proof to the theologians, since the singular opinion of Augustine was always held in the Church, contrary to the probable opinion of all the others. Therefore, the adversaries reason, from the common opinion of the saints, no firm argument is promised by which theological conclusions or the dogmas of faith can be confirmed.

And in the same vein, we can also adduce another example. Most of the holy writers have handed down that Moses, while he lived in this mortal body, did not see the nature of God openly and, as is usually said, face to face. As much is handed down in Jerome to Pope Damasus in the 6th chapter of Isaiah, Gregory Nazianzen’s second book of his *Theologiae*, Gregory the Great’s *Morals*, Book XVIII, Chapter 36, Chrysostom’s Homily 14 on the Gospel of John, Cyril of Alexandria, Book I, Chapter 22 on the Gospel of John, Pope Evaristus in his first decretal, Dionysius in his book *De Mystica Theologia*, chapter 1, and Origin, *De Principiis*, Book I, Chapter 4.

But Augustine’s contrary opinion is not only not rejected, but also considered the most probable among theologians. Ergo, nothing certain is established in theology concerning the common consent of the saints. This can be confirmed by yet another argument which they adduce.

All the saints who mention the matter affirm with one voice that the Blessed Virgin was conceived in original sin, as seen in Ambrose's Commentary on Psalm 118, verse 6, and Augustine's on Psalm 34, verse 13, and in his work *On the Baptism of Children*, Book II, Chapters 10 and 24, and *On the Literal Interpretation of Genesis*, Chapter 18, and *Against Julian*, Book V, Chapter 9, and Chrysostom, on Matthew, and Eusebius, Book I of the *Theophania*, and Remigius on Psalm 21, and Maximus in his Sermon on the Assumption, commenting on the Blessed Virgin. The same is affirmed in Bede in his homily on "Missus Est," and Anselm in his book *Why God Became Man*, chapter 16, and Bernard in Epistle 174 to Lyon, and Saint Anthony of Padua in his *On the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin*, Saint Bernardine in his sermon in his third tractate on the Blessed Virgin, section 4, Saint Bonaventure in his *Commentary on the Sentences*, Book III, Distinction 3, Question 1, Article 2. Saint Thomas, ST.III.Q27.A2, Saint Vincent in his *Sermon on the Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary*; Damascene, in his sentences, book III; Hugo of Saint Victor *On the Sacraments*, Part 2, Chapter 4, and when none of the saints come against this common opinion, our adversaries attempt to show the weakness of the authority of an argument from all, since the contrary opinion is defended, both with probability and piety, in the church.

This is an Achilles' heel of an argument, one which Erasmus employs such that he does not consider himself to be overwhelmed by the testimony of all the saints, even if he contradicts them all.

The reason for this opinion is also supported by our adversaries with the fact that all the saints, unlike the sacred authors who wrote the canonical books, published their books with a human spirit. For if the fathers also spoke by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, it seems that nothing would prevent their books from being included in the canon. Therefore, their books would be a weak place in which the authority of the saints is contained. After all, human truth cannot be firm and certain, since every man is a liar.

And Osiander adds an argument in Book I of the Harmony of the Gospels: all the ancient commentators from the time of the apostles say that what Matthew makes refer to Christ, namely "I called my son out of Egypt," refers, in the true sense of the words, to Israel, but according to allegory to Christ. However, as he says, that allegory, no matter how it is formulated, cannot work. Since, wherever you look, there seems to be nothing similar about the two except that both were in Egypt.

Thus he contends that the sense of the letter from the beginning of the chapter is about Christ the Lord, who is the King of Israel, and is compared to the merit of the East. But if all the saints err in the exposition of the sacred Scriptures, surely the authority of these cannot present a firm argument to the theologians. Here are the arguments with which our adversaries strive to attack and destroy this source of theology.

## CHAPTER 2

For our part, we must needs fight vigorously in defense of the authority of the fathers. So, we posit first that the authority of the Saints can be disputed in three ways: in the first way, about the opinion of this or that saint, such as what Augustine seems to have been about creation in six days. In the second way, by the common consent of several saints, from which this or that saint has departed. Finally, the unanimous and concordant opinion of all, which is the matter of the arguments mentioned.

It must also be considered whether the testimonies of the saints can be referred to in order to confirm notions of philosophy or to verify the assertions of faith/theology. For there were some of the fathers, educated not only in the sacred writings and in other things that pertained to Christianity, but also in those things which the philosophers teach concerning nature as well as morals.

Finally, it must be very carefully observed that there are two kinds of debate among authors in the Church who write about theology. One kind of debate truly concerns faith and Catholic doctrine. The second kind are those things which are neither dogmas of faith nor derived from them, which both the uneducated and the educated may ignore, since there is no loss of piety in doing so.

These two are not easy to distinguish, though, because some things which otherwise pertained to the faith in themselves, and as such were revealed to the apostles, prophets, and evangelists, may come into doubt before they are defined by the Church. But, this is nevertheless done through ignorance, so those who subvert these matters which were otherwise divinely handed down are obviously excused. From this, we may say that, for example, it's clear that certain Greeks could deny the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son as from one principle without fault before the definition of the Church, despite the fact that it was delivered by the Apostles and stated in the Gospels. We include these things under the first category, being the dogmas of the Catholic faith (which we are seeking in this instance), not from the ignorance of imprudent men by accident, but from divine revelation.

Again, we asserted that it is difficult to distinguish those things that come under that first kind and those which come under the second, which are categorized as such by their nature. And indeed it is possible to define these categories with a general rule by a single criterion: in the first category of things are contained all those things which the apostles delivered either by writing or spoken word to the Church, and also the things which are proved to exist by a certain connection to those delivered truths. And in the second category, there are those things which we have received neither from Christ nor from the Apostles, nor are they certain conclusions from those

things which the Church received, since we retain those things by the authority of Christ and the Apostles.

We can hardly indicate all these things with an absolute and complete definition, although we can indicate some of them by particular examples. For example, whether the grace by which we are justified is a certain quality impressed upon the mind which enables it both to exist and to live, from which other qualities are obtained, i.e. certain virtues both theological and moral infused, through which the mind has divine and supernatural actions, is debated amongst the Scholastics.

Likewise, whether or not the Sacraments, which are said to be the cause of grace and virtue, produce such effects by a certain power and non-existent quality divinely endowed, is generally disputed by many people. I would place the multitude of questions of this kind to the latter category, and I do not think that the testimonies of the Scriptures concerning these qualities are to be understood in the way some use them to prove the Biblical nature of such theses. Moreover, the controversy of the Catholics with the Pelagians concerning the grace to believe, to hope, to love, to fulfill the law, to persevere, to be greater in certain qualities, and of God's free and special help is not to be understood as having certain deductions from Scripture either.

Again, if anyone with curiosity wishes to discuss whether John the Evangelist has already passed away, or rather remains alive with Elijah and Enoch, he may. If one wishes to ask if John has already died, or if his flesh has seen corruption and he is to be resurrected at a later time, the inquirer will be able to have reasons on both sides, and with safe faith either attempt to prove or disprove either side. For although it is ordained for all men to die once, but to exempt one or two from that general law by privilege, it is not so contrary to the sacred Scriptures that it may not be called into question.

Now these three principles, since they agree simply with reason, give no need to pursue further. If things are clear, in which there is no controversy, learned men are not wont to argue, since, as Cicero says, "clarity is reached by argument." The above, therefore, having been approved by the consent of everyone, is the first conclusion.

### CHAPTER 3

First conclusion: the authority of the saints, whether of a few or of many, when relating a matter known through the faculties relating to natural phenomena, does not supply certain arguments, but will only have force in so far as it may persuade a man by reason consistent with nature.

First, indeed, because the holy authors did not examine the dogmas of philosophy very carefully. Because of this, they sometimes either allowed the books of the philosophers to have strength in

their opinions, or even sometimes gave them honor of place, such that they regarded them as having divine wisdom.

For Gregory of Nazianzus and Basil are said by Rufinus in the second book, ninth chapter of his ecclesiastical history to have devoted thirteen years to the study of the volumes of divine Scripture alone, removing all secular books from their study. And Jerome, in the introduction to his third book in his commentary on Galatians, says, “it has been more than fifteen years since any author of Gentile literature has come into my hands anywhere, and if anything has perhaps crept into my thoughts from there while I am writing here, we may say that it is as if through the mist of an ancient dream.” And concerning our studies a little later he says, “how many people now read Aristotle? How many know even the books or the name of Plato? The old men, idle in corners, scarcely remember them. But the whole world speaks of our peasants and fishermen, the whole world echoes of them.” Such is the opinion of those authors. I do not seek further examples, since this is more evidence than we need.

Add that some of the ancient saints either did not have knowledge of Aristotle’s Physics and Metaphysics, or at most touched upon them lightly. Others, however, were largely Platonists before they were converted to the faith. For this reason, when they fall into questions of philosophy, they either follow the opinions of the common people and the Rhetoricians, or even carry those which they had received from the Platonists into the Christian school. Thus learned men perhaps detect certain errors (as far as human philosophy is concerned) in the fathers. And it would be very easy to give examples of this, but it is not desirable to single out our ancestors for blame even in these small matters.

Second conclusion: the authority of one or two saints, even in those things which pertain to the sacred scriptures and the doctrine of the faith, can indeed furnish a probable argument, but it cannot furnish a certain one. To despise and regard it as nothing would be impudent: to honor and regard it as certain would be altogether imprudent.

And this conclusion is demonstrated by a clear reason, which cannot be overthrown, namely that because each of the saints (with the exception of those who published the sacred scriptures) spoke with a human spirit, and sometimes even erred in that which was later shown to concern faith, it is clearly evident that faith cannot be made certain by examining such authority. In this place, those are to be admonished who, having received no precepts of theology, after receiving the sacred Scriptures, immediately turn their minds to the reading of the ancient saints. For not all that they have read there is to be approved. Nor should anyone be led into the error which says that, if Ambrose or Jerome did or spoke anything contrary to the custom and doctrine of the time, the same is permissible for him.

This is first of all because some things were not then so defined in the church as we see them to be now. Second, because with their great and divine blessings they acquired a certain license in doing and saying things, which should not be allowed to just anyone. And even if they had lived in our time, they would certainly have done and said some things differently. Why? Because, as we were saying before, even in matters pertaining to faith, the saints sometimes erred. If we are not to depart from them even a little, it is certainly necessary to run into significant, even grave, errors of faith.

Now, Pope Gelasius in his 15th decree in his chapter on the Roman saints approves the works of Cyprian, Chrysostom, Gregory Nazianzus, Basil, and Ambrose. Therefore, some men reason, nothing contrary to the Catholic faith is found in the writings of these men. Otherwise, why were Rufinus's works criticized instead of approved as Jerome noted in his work on the freedom of the will? Why are the books of Origen also condemned, and not those of Ambrose or Cyprian, if these books also in some cases contradicted the orthodox faith? Therefore, either all are condemned in which some error contrary to sound doctrine is found, or all are approved, however much they may be sprinkled with one or the other error. Alongside these arguments, a gloss teaches that those testimonies of Saint Augustine stated above, by which it is shown that men should not place certain faith in the works of the fathers, are to be understood according to those times when the writings of the holy fathers were not known to be authentic. For we may use the words of the Gloss when it says, "But today everything is commanded to be kept even to the iota." In reality, this last argument has been refuted elsewhere, and so it does not need further argument here.

However, we must ask why men reason the way they do concerning Gelasius's decree. Did Gelasius wish to relate that there should be no error in the books of the fathers? Whoever attempts to say this, will, as they say, wash the manuscripts. For God willed that this happiness [of complete inerrancy] should be contained in the sacred Scriptures alone, as Augustine most seriously and truly delivered. No one, however educated and holy, does not sometimes dream up something, does not sometimes go blind, does not sometimes slip.

There was a saint, indeed, who believed that those baptized by heretics should be rebaptized. There was a saint, who denied that there was a sense of punishment and pain in the body of Christ. There was a saint, who descended into the dogma of the Chiliasts. There was a saint, who granted a second marriage to a man who had divorced his wife for the crime of adultery. There was a saint who claimed that souls of the pious were deprived of true happiness until the day of judgment. There was a saint who thought that the soul of man came from their parents. There was a saint who thought that the soul of Adam was created before the body. There were saints who thought that the angels were created many eternities before the corporeal world. And the works of these saints were approved by Gelasius. However, I do not call them by their proper names out of reverence. For I would like to simply lay down enough examples as are necessary



for the idle reader, protecting holiness and antiquity. Let us therefore read the fathers with reverence indeed, but, them being men, with selection and judgment.

But if anyone thinks differently, and does not acquiesce in sound counsels, he is no longer captivated by the religion of the saints, but by the love of himself, and he would be attempting to introduce new opinions under the name of the old. On this matter, Vincent of Lerins notes: “O marvellous revolution! The authors of this same doctrine are judged Catholics, the followers heretics; the teachers are absolved, the disciples condemned...this condemnation, indeed, seems to have been providentially promulgated as though with a special view to the fraud of those who, contriving to dress up a heresy under a name other than its own, get hold often of the works of some ancient writer, not very clearly expressed, which, owing to the very obscurity of their own doctrine, have the appearance of agreeing with it, so that they get the credit of being neither the first nor the only persons who have held it. This wickedness of theirs, in my judgment, is doubly hateful: first, because they are not afraid to invite others to drink of the poison of heresy; and secondly, because with profane breath, as though fanning smouldering embers into flame, they blow upon the memory of each holy man, and spread an evil report of what ought to be buried in silence by bringing it again under notice, thus treading in the footsteps of their father Ham, who not only forebore to cover the nakedness of the venerable Noah, but told it to the others that they might laugh at it, offending thereby so grievously against the duty of filial piety, that even his descendants were involved with him in the curse which he drew down, widely differing from those blessed brothers of his, who would neither pollute their own eyes by looking upon the nakedness of their revered father, nor would suffer others to do so, but went backwards, as the Scripture says, and covered him, that is, they neither approved nor betrayed the fault of the holy man.” So much Vincent.

And again: “But what, if in antiquity itself there be found error on the part of two or three men, or at any rate of a city or even of a province? Then it will be his care by all means, to prefer the decrees, if such there be, of an ancient General Council to the rashness and ignorance of a few. But what, if some error should spring up on which no such decree is found to bear? Then he must collate and consult and interrogate the opinions of the ancients, of those, namely, who, though living in various times and places, yet continuing in the communion and faith of the one Catholic Church, stand forth acknowledged and approved authorities: and whatsoever he shall ascertain to have been held, written, taught, not by one or two of these only, but by all, equally, with one consent, openly, frequently, persistently, that he must understand that he himself also is to believe without any doubt or hesitation.” Vincent of Lerins says this no less prudently than truly.

From these facts Calvin's calumny is easily refuted, by which he, in order to excuse the impudence of the Lutherans, conveyed the innocence of Catholics to King Francis of France. For when it was most truly and most seriously objected to the Lutherans, that there were everywhere both despisers and adversaries of the Fathers, Calvin said, “those holy men were ignorant of

many things; they often conflict with each other, sometimes even fight with themselves.” Then he goes on to list as many errors of the fathers as he could gather, falsely attributes those errors to them, and proceeds to ask why we also depart from the fathers (even though we don’t)? We will use Augustine in the first section, who in his book *Contra Julianum*, Book I, Chapter 2, he says, “There are some matters in which even the most learned and excellent defenders of the Catholic rule sometimes do not agree with each other, while still preserving the framework of the faith: other matters, however, which pertain to the very foundations of the faith.” In the former we sometimes depart from the Fathers: in the latter the Lutherans. And indeed, we modestly and reverently turn our eyes away from the error of the Fathers: but the Lutherans either regard the fathers as derisory, or certainly as contemptible. We sometimes disagree with one or another of the fathers, but the Lutherans often disagree with the unanimous consensus of the fathers. It is one thing to reject the private belief of one or two saints (which we say is sometimes permissible in this second conclusion), and quite another to speak against the common faith and doctrine of all of them. Now, to what extent that is permissible and how it might be so, we will be demonstrated in the following conclusions. However, what we first desire to prove in this disputation is the explanation of what the Church intends when she approves the books of some fathers. Let us move on, as we have not yet cleared up the arguments which confirmed the opinion of that Gloss.

Even the most approved ecclesiastical authors are not all in the same rank and place. Nor should we make any great effort here to refute the folly of those who equate the Vulgate [since it was translated by Jerome] with the works of Augustine. Just as the things created by God were indeed all approved, as the Scripture says that, “God saw all that he had made, and they were very good,” the various and different natures of things did not receive the same place, force, or stability. For there are heavenly bodies and earthly bodies. But the glory of the heavenly is one, and that of the earthly is another. One is the brightness of the sun, another of the moon, another of the stars. “For a star differs from star in brightness” (1 Corinthians 15). Indeed were the ecclesiastical writers approved, who, being enlightened by the light of the Holy Spirit, themselves enlightened the Church, yet the clarity of Matthew is different from that of Jerome, which is different from that of Isaiah, which is different from that of Ambrose. The canonical authors, as being lofty, heavenly, and divine, maintain a perpetual and stable constancy. But the rest of the saints are inferior and human, and sometimes fail, giving birth to a blunder outside the appropriate order and institutions of nature.

Is [the case of] Eusebius, bishop of Caesarea, then proven? Is Rufinus? Is Origen? For these too enlightened the church of Christ with their writings. It was one thing to err in obscure matters, and which were not at that time explained and defined: another in clear and exact matters, and which were then most firmly believed in the church. The former was the case of Cyprian, Ambrose, and Augustine, and the latter of Origen, of Eusebius, and of Rufinus. Likewise, Cyprian, Ambrose, and Jerome in no way deviated from the fellowship of the holy Roman

Church, nor were they separated from its faithful preaching, but by the grace of communion itself they were always partakers, if we may also use the words of Gelasius. On the other hand, Origen abandoned unity, and was rightly and deservedly considered the source of Arius's learning, hence he is called a schismatic by Gelasius. This is why Eusebius is also reproached for being an excessive praiser of Origen, and a most ardent supporter of Arius. As to Rufinus, a man otherwise religious, he erred in a very manifest matter, namely in free will, and is convicted of having vehemently favored Origen and Origen's disciples. Now, the Church has always been not only cautious, but also harsh and severe against the Origenists, from whom she has experienced a great plague in ecclesiastical doctrine. This is enough of the second conclusion. Let us now proceed to the rest.

Third conclusion: the authority of many saints, although there may be fewer opposing voices, is not sufficient to provide and guarantee firm arguments for the theologian.

This is sufficiently shown by the second argument given above. Augustine and a few others among the ancient saints asserted that angels are also corporeal: and although this opinion is false, it cannot be disproved as contrary to faith from the common opinion of the ancients.

But Thomas Waldensis, in the preface to the ancient doctrinal faith, teaches that what the majority of the fathers understood from the apostles is the faith of the Catholic Church. Vincent of Lerins also reports the same in his book *Adversus Prophanas Novationes*. These are true, I do not deny, but that applies to when the Church completely rejected the contrary opinion of one or a few, such as the opinion of those who thought that those who came from heretics should be baptized again, or the opinion of those who said that Melchizedek was not a man, but the Holy Spirit. For the Church has always shuddered at both of these ideas since the time of their rejection. However, if the opinion of one or a few has not been rejected by the Church, then the authority of many, as we have said, will not establish anything certain and firm. So much for the third conclusion.

Fourth conclusion: the authority of all the saints also in those kind of questions which, as we have said, have no bearing on faith, indeed makes faith probable, yet it does not make it certain.

I consider this conclusion to be amply proved by the last argument, that this controversy is not among those which can either add to or detract from the Catholic faith is clear from this: that the Blessed Virgin was entirely free from original sin is nowhere stated in the sacred books according to the true sense of the letter. For in them a general law is delivered, which embraces all the sons of Adam, that is, created by carnal propagation, without any exception.

Nor can it be said that it came down to the Church through the tradition of the apostles, since such traditions have come down to us through none other than those ancient bishops and holy

authors who succeeded the apostles. But it is clear that those ancient writers did not receive it from their ancestors. For they would in good faith also hand it down to their posterity. Therefore, that cannot pertain to faith which is neither found in the sacred writings, nor in the traditions of the apostles, nor can it be concluded from them by a certain connection.

Moreover, that even the opposite assertion, that is, that the Blessed Virgin contracted original sin from her parents, is not among the Catholic dogmas, is most clearly gathered from the fact that to exempt only the Mother of God from the universal law by a singular privilege is in no way contrary to the sacred letters of faith. Else, since the sacred texts cry out to the universe, "No man shall see me and live; no man has ever seen God," (John 1:18) he who grants the exception of Paul and Moses would be fighting against the sacred Scriptures.

And that is the reason, unless my mind is mistaken in all heaven, why neither Sixtus IV, nor the Lateran Council under Leo X, nor the Synod of Trent, begun under Paul and Julius III, defined that question. For neither of those opinions could be approved as Catholic dogma. Thus he erred who asserted that it was erroneous to say that anyone besides Christ could be freed from that law of original sin. The Council of Basel erred, and even more so, when it defined that the doctrine which teaches that the Blessed Virgin Mary was never subject to original sin should be embraced as consonant with sacred Scripture and the Catholic faith, and that no one else is permitted to teach the contrary. For they are in equal error who believe that either side can be related to the Catholic faith.

It is difficult to say this, I believe, if it were sought in a sermon, but in this place and in a discussion it would be very easy. For here we are not contending with the ignorance of the common people, but we are instituting those who desire to hold a solid and clear image of true and Germanic theology, and not to pursue fugitive shadows. The purpose, however, is to speak both against our own and for others for the sake of discovering the truth: and, when the situation demands, to criticize both, accepting no one's person. And especially in that work which we are forging for the public benefit of the Church, we should not have served private affections.

Nor will there be a lack of even learned men after this who will rebuke me, and there will be those who will blame me, for having deliberately and thoughtfully fallen into a question that is unpopular with many, in order to assert that an otherwise a very serious matter is of no importance in the Christian religion. For I can both appease benevolent scolders and refute envious scolders: so that some may regret having rebuked them, others may rejoice that they have learned from them. I frankly confess that no other way was open to me for eluding that argument of Erasmus, by which he indeed acutely attempted to elude the authority of the saints.

Nor was it entirely proper, as has always been the custom of heretics, to corrupt the books of the ancient fathers, and even to truncate a good part of the volumes, so that I could, at least with a

protesting mouth, and with conscience, deny that Augustine, Bernard, Ambrose, and other fathers held that opinion. For what is the use, if you desire to know the truth, of scraping off the testimonies of the saints inscribed on the parchment, when you cannot abolish those engraved on the mind? Moreover, if, in order to protect the authority of the saints in Catholic doctrine, which was most necessary for the Church of God, we asserted that certain opinions, not to say factions, of certain people are not necessary for faith and morals, what is it, I beg you, by God, that anyone should be able to admonish us on this matter, either as a friend or as an enemy?

And these things have indeed been said so far in confirmation of the fourth conclusion. In which case also we have a sufficiently suitable and weighty witness, Vincent of Lerins, in his book *Against Profane Innovations*, as he says, “where the ancient consensus of the holy fathers, not in all the questions of the divine law, but only in the rule of faith, is to be investigated and followed by us with great diligence.” This is what must be explained in the fifth conclusion. In which, since this begins to alter the subject, although much must be passed over, yet much must still be said, both most useful for the knowledge of sacred Scriptures and necessary for the use of the schools.

Fifth conclusion: in the exposition of sacred literature, the common understanding of all the ancient saints provides the theologian with the most certain argument for corroborating theological assertions, since the sense of all the saints is the sense of the Holy Spirit Himself.

To this conclusion, I am going to confirm with great arguments, and which, unless my mind deceives me, can so decide the controversy that the question can no longer be disputed among Catholics. But I will approach this matter if I have first said a few things about the reputation of Cajetan. I have always held this man to be the greatest, as I have often testified before. For he greatly helped the Church of Christ by his letters. But it would be too long to commend a man either for his learning or his genius: it would be too laborious to mention all his works.

It can be said briefly that Cajetan could have been equal to the greatest builders of the Church, had he not defiled his doctrine with certain errors, as if mixed with a kind of leprosy, and, either moved by the lust of curiosity, or certainly relying on the dexterity of his intellect, had he finally expounded the sacred texts at his own discretion, generally very happily indeed, but in a few places much more sharply than happily. For, not being too keen on the ancient tradition, and also not very versed in the reading of the saints, he refused to learn the mysteries of the sealed book [i.e. the Scriptures] from those who did not open them by their own sense, but by the tradition of their ancestors, namely, by the true key of the word of God. Thus, having written many things excellently, he turned everything to the extreme, and by some new expositions of the writings of others, which he had either said most seriously, he either raised or diminished their authority. I criticize him by explicitly name reluctantly, indeed, since he is a most learned man, but, since the fame of his name and glory was objected to in this place by the Lutherans, I thought his

rashness should be noted. And the error into which he fell is of such a kind that I must, with all reason, send him away, and yet I cannot do so without open criticism of the greatest man.

In the beginning of his commentary on Genesis, he says, "If ever a new sense occurs that is consonant with the text, although foreign to the torrent of sacred doctors, let the reader present himself as a fair censor." And a little later, he says, "let no one detest a new sense of sacred Scripture because it is discordant with the ancient doctors, for God did not bind the exposition of sacred Scripture to the senses of ancient doctors: but the entire Scripture itself is under the judgment of the Catholic Church. Otherwise, the hope of explaining the Holy Scripture would be taken away from us and posterity, except by transferring [the already-given interpretations], as they say, from one book to another." So much Cajetan.

And indeed, to follow our ancestors in everything and to set our feet in their footsteps, as children do in play, seems to be nothing other than condemning our own natures, depriving us of our judgment and the ability to seek the truth. Let us follow the ancients, it is right, but as guides, not as masters. For they will not dominate our faith, nor should we be so attached and enslaved to them that we have no choice in interpreting the sacred writings. This argument could have moved Cajetan to oppose the fifth conclusion.

For Luther is wont to be moved by grosser conjectures. Indeed, in the prologue of his *Assertions* of the articles he says that no one should be compelled by the authority of the fathers, because in the writings of all men many errors are found, they often fight among themselves, they often disagree with each other, and they distort the Scriptures. He does not allow any laws for interpreting the word of God, saying that the word of God should not be bound, but free. And that it is the same to make laws and interpret laws, wherefore men can indeed be certain interpreters of human laws, but in no way of divine ones.

Wycliffe held this same opinion as Thomas Waldensis in his third book on the ancient doctrines of the Faith, Peter Abelard also held the same right at the very beginning of his disputations, as St. Bernard wrote in his 190th Epistle to Innocent, "Peter Abelard says that there is one opinion of all ecclesiastical doctors on this matter, and he sets it up and despises it, and boasts that he has a better one, not fearing to transgress the ancient boundaries that our fathers set, contrary to the precept of the wise." Also in the same boat of error, Arius, Nestorius, Eutyches, and Dioscorus were condemned in the seventh synod, first act, seventh anathema. Basil himself indicated in the *Epistles On Arianism* and certainly we have the witness of Alexander of Alexandria, in Sozomen's *Historia Tripartita*, Book I, chapter 14. But Nestorius, while he was eloquent and thought himself learned, disdained to devote himself to the books of ancient interpreters, and thought himself better than all of them, as is related in the same work, Book 12, chapter 4. Paul of Samosata entered into the same error, as Eusebius records in Book 7, chapter 26 of his

*Ecclesiastical Histories*. The Severians also entered by the same route, as the same Eusebius, book 4 chapter 29 of the same, testifies.

But what Vincent of Lerins relates against profane innovations about Origen, I will not hesitate to add: so that even from this one example pious men may learn to be modest in expounding the sacred writings, seeing as that author [Vincent] had extolled Origen's genius, learning, eloquence, and other admirable virtues, he says, "This same great man, while he abuses the grace of God more insolently, while he indulges his own genius too much and believes himself to be sufficient, while he disregards the ancient simplicity of the Christian religion, while he presumes to be wiser than all, while, despising ecclesiastical traditions and the teachings of the ancients, he interprets certain chapters of the Scriptures in a new way, has deserved that it should be said of himself also: If a prophet should arise in your midst," etc. (Deuteronomy 13). Therefore, that opinion of Cajetan seems to have been common among heretics and schismatics.

Nor do I wish to overcome heretics by argument. For what can you do to those who with the same impudence have despised the judgments of the Apostolic See, the dogmas of the councils, the traditions of the apostles, and the teaching of all the saints? We undertake our arguments against Cajetan, though, who, as he was ingenious, would weigh our arguments: and as he was pious, would not be at all rebuffed after hearing the most weighty testimonies. And it was enough for us that our ancestors had thus delivered them to us. But Cajetan despises authority, fights with reason: therefore he will suffer my arguments to contend with his own.

Although you may rightly demand from philosophers a reason for a philosophical conclusion, you must trust our ancestors in their understanding of sacred writings, even without any reason given: and defend the opinions you have received from them about law, faith, and religion. But I will defend them and have always defended them. Nor will any reason, whether learned or unlearned, ever move me from the sense which I received from the Fathers. But come, let us reason, and show that in the exposition of the Holy Scriptures the harmonious sense of the ancients must be held, if we wish to be Catholics. But first, however, let us explain what our ancestors thought on that matter.

For when the discourse has brought me to this place, I will teach what I have learned, not only from the reasonings of theologians, but also from the testimonies of antiquity. Clement, in particular, to the disciples of James, says, "It has been reported that some teach, not according to the tradition of the fathers, but according to their own sense. For from many things which they read they take probabilities according to the nature of men. Therefore it is necessary to observe diligently, that the law of God is not taught according to one's own understanding. For there are many words in the divine scriptures, which can be drawn to that sense which each one has voluntarily assumed for himself. Which ought not to be done. For you should not seek a sense which you bring from outside, foreign and extraneous, but from the scriptures themselves you

should take the sense of truth. And therefore it is necessary to learn the understanding of the Scriptures from him who preserves it according to the truth handed down to him by his fathers, so that he too may be able to competently assert those things which he has rightly received.” Thus Clement, who also in book 10 (if the book is accepted here) testifies that he received this document from the apostle Peter.

Dionysius also, in *De Coelesti Hierarchia*, book I, says, “Let us continue to contemplate, as best we can, the understandings of the most holy Scriptures, as we have received them from the Fathers.” The same witness is joined by the rich[-in-knowledge] Irenaeus, who also writes in Book 4, Chapter 63, that the legitimate exposition of the Scriptures is to be received through the tradition of the fathers.

Epiphanius again, when he refutes the heretics who called themselves apostolic, says, “scriptures require speculation in order to know the force and power of each argument. It is also necessary to use tradition, for not everything can be taken from divine Scripture.” Thus Epiphanius. But tradition, without a doubt, he calls the understanding and sense received from the fathers. For Peter is the author of the key to the word of God, as Clement says in Book 10 of the *Recognitions*. But this is said to have been possessed by the learned, to whom, namely, the traditions of Moses and the fathers had come as it were by hand.

Also Clement of Alexandria, *Stroma*. Book 7., affirms that those who interpret the Scriptures against ecclesiastical tradition have lost the rule of truth. And later in the same book, also discussing heretics, says, “And those have a craving for glory who voluntarily evade, by arguments of a diverse sort, the things delivered by the blessed apostles and teachers, which are wedded to inspired words; opposing the divine tradition by human teachings, in order to establish the heresy. For, in truth, what remained to be said — in ecclesiastical knowledge I mean — by such men, Marcion, for example, or Prodicus, and such like, who did not walk in the right way? For they could not have surpassed their predecessors in wisdom, so as to discover anything in addition to what had been uttered by them; for they would have been satisfied had they been able to learn the things laid down before.”

And also Origen, in his 29th Tractate on Matthew, says, “Whenever heretics bring forth canonical scriptures in which every Christian agrees and believes, they seem to say, ‘Behold, the word of truth is in the houses.’ But we must not believe them, nor depart from the first and ecclesiastical tradition, nor believe otherwise than as they have handed down to us through the succession of the Church of God.” Thus Origen.

Ambrose also in his third book to Gratian on the Faith says, “Let us observe the precepts of our ancestors, and let us not dare to violate the hereditary seals with rude rashness. Who among us



dares to invalidate the book of the priests, signed by confessors, and already consecrated by the martyrdom of many?

Jerome, in addition, in his Epistle to Evagrius: “I turned to the books of the ancients, to see what each one said, so that I might answer you as if from the counsel of many...And I discovered that all these opinions...They came to one conclusion, that Melchizedek was a Canaanite man.” And there are many other things, too many to recount (Epistles 73, 55, 10, 22, 14). He says, “You have what I have heard, what I have read about Melchizedek. It was my job to recite the witnesses, it is yours to judge the faith of the witnesses. But if you reject all, you will certainly not be able to receive your spiritual interpreter, who pronounced Melchizedek the Holy Spirit with such arrogance and authority that he proved that most true thing, which is sung among the Greeks: ignorance creates confidence, learning creates fear.”

And *On Daniel*, chapter 12, he says, “The most ignorant claim for themselves an understanding of the Holy Scriptures without the grace of God and the teaching of their ancestors.” And in his Epistle to Paulinus, he teaches most elegantly, with many testimonies, examples, and reasons, that no one can enter the sacred scriptures without a prior guide who shows the path, just as Clement of Alexandria had taught in Book 5 of his *Stromata*.

And even Cicero, in his *Epistulae ad Familiares*, says, “in general, no writing can be understood without a teacher and interpreter.” But he who approaches the sacred writings without a teacher, neglecting the meaning of the ancient fathers, interprets the arcane scripture in his own way.

Augustine also says similar things to these in his book on the Profit of Believing, Chapter 7: For since this man thought he could read and understand the sacred books without the help of others, isn't the point proven? Augustine says, “Without having received any instruction in poetry, you would not dare to essay to read Terentianus Maurus without a master: Asper, Cornutus, Donatus, and others without number are needed, that any poet whatever may be understood...yet you rush upon the holy books without a guide, and dare to deliver an opinion on them without a teacher.” And in chapter 17, he says, “If every discipline, however cheap and easy, requires a teacher or master in order to be understood, what is more full of reckless pride than to refuse to learn the books of the divine sacraments from their interpreters?” Such is what Augustine has said on the matter.

Gregory the Great also, in Book 28, chapter 9 of his *Morals*, confirms this conclusion, explaining that from the holy doctors, “the bases of the Scriptures are solidified.” I will add to these one of Cassiodorus's in the preface to his book *Divine Institutes*, noting these words: “Let us ascend to divine Scripture through the plausible explanations of the Fathers, as if by a certain ladder of Jacob's vision, so that, advanced by their senses, we may merit to arrive effectively at the knowledge of the Lord.” And in the same book, chapter two, he says, “There are some who think

it is praiseworthy if they think something against the ancients, and invent something new so that they may appear to be experts.” And in the same chapter, book 25, he says, “All that the ancient expositors probably said must be held with a solicitous mind: but those things which were left untouched by them, lest we tire ourselves with fruitless labor, must first be examined to see what virtues they possess, or to what habits they lead us.”

Add to this also Gregory Nazianzus and Basil, who in Rufinus’s Ecclesiastical Histories, Book 2, he hands down that, “they followed the understanding of the divine Scriptures not from their own presumption, but from the writings and authority of their ancestors. It was clear that they themselves had received the rule of understanding from the apostolic succession.” So much there.

And these were enough for a modest man to be led to our opinion. For who is not moved by antiquity, attested and recorded in the most illustrious monuments? Certainly when I hear Clement, Dionysius, Irenaeus, Epiphanius, Nazianzen, Basil, Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine, Cassiodorus, and Bernard all expressing the same thing, I do not think that I am hearing the opinion of so many men, most learned and most holy men indeed: but of the Catholic Church, of which they were the chief pillars. For it is not to be believed that all those men thought anything else with such great agreement than what the Catholic Church commonly thought.

But we have besides more weighty witnesses to make this matter full and complete. For perhaps some one will say that the testimonies which we have related are more against the Lutherans than against Cajetan. For he was not so insolent as either to despise the teaching of the ancients altogether, or to reject their commentaries on the sacred books. He denied that the common understanding of the ancients alone is the certain line to which we should always direct our understandings. This we do not yet seem to have refuted. But, whatever these may be, it pleases me to seek the main point of the cause, and to bring my feet closer together, so that the error of Cajetan may be refuted by the most certain arguments.

But first, in the sixth general synod, session 2, the Origenists were condemned for having attempted to introduce the same new explanations that Cajetan introduces here against the tradition of the fathers. Sophronius says, “They asserted many other things outside the apostolic and paternal tradition, rejecting the planting of Paradise, denying that Adam was formed in the flesh, criticizing that Eve was formed from him, and arguing against the talk of the serpent.” So much there. This letter of Sophronius was approved by the 13th synodal act of the same sixth general council.

Then Canon 19 of the Synod of Trullo has it thus: “It is necessary for those who preside over the churches to teach the clergy and the people, gathering from divine Scripture the understandings and judgments of truth, and not transgressing the limits already set, or the tradition of the divine

fathers. But even if some controversy pertaining to Scripture has been stirred up, let them not interpret it otherwise than how the luminaries and doctors of the Church have expounded it in their writings, and let them obtain greater praise from this than if they were to compose what is said by themselves. Lest, while they sometimes hesitate in this, they fall away from what is agreed upon.” Such was said by the council of Trullo.

“To this matter, concerning the understanding of the testimony of John the Evangelist, “when they came to Jesus, they saw that he was already dead,” etc., the matter was referred to the Council of Vienne, since a question had arisen among the faithful; Clement, presiding over the council, speaks thus: “We, turning to the common opinion of the holy fathers and doctors, with the approval of the sacred council, declare,” etc. Therefore, when the Apostolic See and the Council of Vienne pronounce on the faith and understanding of sacred writings, they hold the common view of the saints as the thread of Theseus, and follow them as guides of understanding.

The Fifth Lateran Council also, under Leo X, Act II, enjoins all who are to teach the people the truth of the Gospel to explain Holy Scripture according to the interpretation of the doctors whom the Church or long-standing practice has approved. Nor should they [i.e. the teachers] add anything contrary or discordant to their proper meaning, but should always insist on those which do not disagree with the interpretations of the aforementioned doctors.

Moreover, the same thing was defined more clearly in the Synod of Trent, session 4, in these words: “furthermore, in order to restrain petulant spirits, It decrees, that no one, relying on his own skill, shall,— in matters of faith, and of morals pertaining to the edification of Christian doctrine, —wresting the sacred Scripture to his own senses, presume to interpret the said sacred Scripture contrary to that sense which holy mother Church,—whose it is to judge of the true sense and interpretation of the holy Scriptures,—hath held and doth hold; or even contrary to the unanimous consent of the Fathers.” Such the Council of Trent. I could add here the decree of the fifth synod from Ivo of Chartres under the second heading, book 2. c. 14. And another similar one from the council of Melden. canon 2 from Burchard of Worms, book I. cap. 61, but we pass over many things, lest we burden the reader with a long discussion.

And we have not a few testimonies from the sacred Scriptures to confirm the same thing. First of all, that from Ecclesiasticus, chapter 8: “Let not the discourse of the ancients escape thee, for they have learned of their fathers, for of them thou shalt learn understanding, and to give an answer in time of need.” And the Apostle in the Epistle to the Romans, chapter 12: “For I say, by the grace that is given me, to all that are among you, not to be more wise than it behoveth to be wise, but to be wise unto sobriety and according as God hath divided to every one the measure of faith...and having different gifts, according to the grace that is given us, either prophecy, to be used according to the rule of faith.” And, truly, the term Prophet is used by the Apostle not only

for one who sees and foretells the future, but also for one who, by the gift of the Holy Spirit, understands and explains the oracles of the prophets, of Christ, and of the apostles.

Paul commands that whoever has undertaken such a task in the church, first of all, not to be inquiring into matters greater than he ought, but to be wiser with modesty and temperance; then, he may have prophecy according to the proportion of faith. In expounding the sacred texts, let him not follow the acumen of human intellect, or the power of nature and reason, but interpret them according to the faith received from his ancestors, and the reason proportional to this faith. For one may perhaps be able to expound the philosophers according to the reason of science, even without any faith employed, but one cannot soberly expound the sacred books without the faith and doctrine of one's ancestors.

But he who, in explaining Aristotle, would consider all the Peripatetics of old as nothing, and, when they objected with great consensus, would prescribe to us a new interpretation of a paradox never heard of from the philosopher's opinion, would hardly be considered sober. So much more so, then, that he who, by his own ingenuity, would inject certain new opinions into the books of the apostles, and would make them contrary to the disciples of the apostles and to all the ancient interpreters, here is certainly no reason why he should be considered sufficiently sane. But enough about the second testimony.

Third, in 1 Corinthians, chapter 14, it is written that [we should] "let the prophets speak, two or three: and let the rest judge." And thus, let no one rashly disagree with the rest: "For God is not the God of dissension," St. Paul says, "but of peace." That is, not of him who has failed to agree in unity, but of those who have remained in the peace of agreement, as Vincent of Lerins explained when he said, "I teach in all the churches of the saints," that is, of the Catholics. These are thus holy, because they persist in the communion of saints. And lest anyone should ultimately draw the judgment of these matters back to himself alone, disregarding the rest, he adds a little later: "If any seem to be a prophet or spiritual, let him know the things that I write to you, that they are the commandments of the Lord."

It is certainly commanded that if anyone is a teacher of spiritual things, he should be a worshipper of unity with the utmost zeal: that he should neither prefer his own opinions to those common to all others, nor depart from the common sense of all. This will be done, however, if two precepts are observed. One, that the interpreter of sacred writings should always look to the earlier ones: from whom the word of God proceeded to posterity. For the apostle warns the Corinthians of this matter, saying: "did the word of God come out from you?" The second is that he should not defend his own opinion with tenacious contention, but first consult the other doctors of the Church, so that if he sees that what he thinks is approved by all, he may safely hold on to it; if it is disapproved, he may safely abandon it. For this is what the apostle means when he says, "did it come only unto you?" For this is clearly how I believe Paul's statements to

be interpreted. But if this testimony of the apostle seems to anyone more suitable for advising than for convincing, I would not consider it necessary to engage in contentious debate with him. For we ourselves do not believe that all the arguments we use are conclusive.

The fourth testimony of the same apostle is very weighty. It is in Ephesians 4, in these very words: "He gave some apostles, and some prophets, and other some evangelists, and other some pastors and doctors for the perfecting of the saints, for the word of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ... That henceforth we be no more children tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the wickedness of men, by cunning craftiness by which they lie in wait to deceive."

These words of Paul, since they are more fully explained in the third place, we will now touch lightly, and as much as will be sufficient to confirm what we are now dealing with. From these words, therefore, it is clearly understood that it was divine providence that we should have not only the writings of the prophets, apostles, and evangelists, but also the commentaries of the holy doctors on them. For it is certainly for this reason that, after the prophets, apostles, and evangelists, the teachers are given to the church by Christ, so that these sacred Scriptures may be interpreted. Therefore, whoever despises these which have been divinely provided in the church of God in various times and places, as being in agreement with the same sense of Scripture, does not despise man but God: by whom they were appointed for this purpose, that they might teach the Christian people the sacred writings of the prophets, apostles, and evangelists.

But if all the saints erred while interpreting them, then the Church, protected by God's authority, would err, since it followed the teachers given to it by Christ, and followed in their footsteps in the understanding of the books of the sacred canon. Nor is it unknown to me that Paulinus and Augustine in their epistles 58 and 59 do not accept the prophets in this Apostle's testimony as those who had foretold the future before the coming of the Lord, whose writings we retain as canonical and divine, but those who in the Church of Christ at the time of the Apostles had the grace of prophesying. But since we cannot deny that both were given to the Church by Christ, it should not seem strange if we exclude neither from the words of the Apostle. But perhaps someone will continue to strive against this interpretation, saying:

Since the canon of Scripture is perfect and sufficiently sufficient for everything, what need is there for the intelligence and authority of the saints to be added to it? [We respond that] the sacred Scripture, for its very depth and obscurity, is not received by all in one and the same sense, but is interpreted differently by each and every person, so that almost as many opinions seem to be able to be extracted from it as there are men. For Novatus explains it differently, Sabellius differently, Arius differently, and Donatus differently. Therefore, it is necessary that the succession of prophetic and apostolic interpretation, because of so many different rifts of error, be directed according to some norm. For this reason, then, after the prophets, apostles, and

evangelists, we also received holy doctors. This is so that we might follow their catholic, that is, universal, understanding as a rule of the Church prescribed by God. Therefore, it is clearly added: “For the perfecting of the saints,...and for the building up of the body of Christ,...so that we may not be as little children,” etc. And this is enough about the words of the Apostles.

Now we will add the one testimony of Solomon, which, if very carefully considered, will contribute much to corroborating the matter of which we are discussing: “The words of the wise are as goads, and as nails deeply fastened in, which by the counsel of masters are given from one shepherd. More than these, my son, require not.” In this place, Jerome says, “Except for the words which were given by one pastor, and approved by the council and consensus of the wise, you shall claim nothing for yourself; follow in the footsteps of your ancestors, do not disagree with their authority.” Thus Jerome.

And we understand who that one shepherd is through Ezekiel, where it is written: “I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them...and he shall be their shepherd.” But do not think that Christ Himself would always do this, as He warns through Jeremiah, saying, “And I will give you shepherds according to my own heart, and they shall feed you with knowledge and doctrine.” That the words of the saints were given by that one shepherd, shows such and so great agreement of all, for not all could understand the same thing with one mind, unless they were held in that unity by one and the same spirit of Christ. Hence the inspired Solomon says that they were given by one shepherd through a council of teachers.

For no one denies that the ancient saints were wise men; that they were teachers of the Church is certain; that they were given to the Church by God is made manifest by the providence of Christ towards the Church; that they were given to explain the oracles of the apostles, prophets, and evangelists is indicated by Paul; that they were so many and so diverse in place and time are provided by one shepherd, is shown by the unity and concord of opinion. So that it is permissible to regard nothing other than a council of teachers, which was gathered together by one spirit of truth.

Certainly, for Augustine this is so, as he says in Book 2 of *Against Julian* that if a synod of bishops were to be assembled from the whole world to decide a controversy that had arisen concerning the sacred books, neither all such men could easily sit, nor so many. For there were no saints at one time.

Now, Father Cajetan, if it is permissible to call a son father, I call you, I say, I call you, I call you to the council, I bring you not into the Lyceum or the Academy, but into the peaceful and honorable assembly of the holy fathers. Place before your eyes, I beg you, such a numerous series of most learned men, whom the consensus of so many centuries has approved up to this day: whom, besides their admirable skill in the study of the sacred Scriptures, also their

wonderful piety of life commends. Look at them, I beg you, as if they were looking at you, and speaking to you meekly and gently. Is it so, my son Cajetan, that we all err together in the exposition of the sacred writings? Is it so that all of us, whom Christ gave as teachers of the Church, lack the spirit of understanding? Is it so that you alone dare to fight against us, and do you believe that the Church will follow the opinion of one man, but will abandon the common judgment of this most solemn and most holy senate? Do you judge that more should be attributed to the judgments of so many learned men, saints, and martyrs, or to your own singular and private judgment? Will you not answer these questions, or will you dare to gape at all? I seem to see, Father Cajetan, your modesty and candor, and even your religious reverence and piety towards the saints, and as if you were there I hear your voice ringing around my ears: we have both won. Each of us bears the palm: you mine, and I error.

But I do not know, good reader, where the impulse of the mind and the excessive heat of discussion have taken me. For Cajetan has long been in that place where he has overcome all errors without my discussion: and I am not accustomed to insulting those whose minds I admire with their errors.

But let us, as we have begun, continue and refute this error with theological arguments. Authority is more powerful than reason in establishing faith in theological matters, since, without reason, it still has sufficient weight, and reason is not very effective without authority. But nevertheless, reason, combined with authority, will have as much power as we could desire to establish faith. And we promised from the very beginning that we would settle this matter with Cajetan by reason rather than by testimonies.

First, however, those who promote this new way of expounding the sacred scriptures, besides having destroyed the old repute of the ancients, are an example to vain men and even more to heretics, in that they contaminate the true meaning of holy writ with new and false interpretations. But if this license is once admitted, that each may interpret the sacred books according to his own will, I shudder to think of how great a danger there will be of abolishing religion altogether.

For if every single part of the Holy Scriptures is left to the freedom of human reasoning, then any and every doctrine will be debated as the things of men are debated, that is, like a custom. But if the whole of the Divine Scriptures is allowed to be explained by the reasoning and arbitrariness of any man, nothing will be left firm. 'It would then be necessary that there would be a brothel of errors, where before there was a sanctuary of chaste and uncorrupted truth,' as Vincent of Lerins says, no less truly than elegantly. Moreover, besides the inconveniences, both many and great, which this opinion brings to the future faithful in the Church, it cannot explain the fact that, under this view, the Church that preceded us would have believed the most serious error. Both preachers and all writers who succeeded the ancient saints have handed down to the people the

meaning of the Holy Scriptures according to the doctrine received from those fathers, and the people have confidently accepted the same meaning: namely, he who rejects the harmonious exposition of the ancient saints is guilty of rejecting the understanding which the Church has hitherto had.

To give an example, let us suppose something that is more widely understood: all the saints explained that Eve was created from the rib of Adam, as the Scripture says. Since the priests who came later found this explained by the saints, they diligently explained it to the Christian people, and the people themselves believed it in good faith. It thus came about that when the ancient saints erred in the interpretation of that passage, the whole church was involved in the same error. Furthermore, Nestorius clearly understood that the ignorance of the saints and the church was connected, being condemned by the Council of Ephesus in these words: "We have been led into the wicked presumption of Nestorius, who boasted that he was the first and only one to understand the Holy Scriptures; and he ignored all those who had before him been endowed with the office of teacher and had treated of the divine oracles. Even now, he believes that the whole Church was in error, which, as it seemed to him, followed ignorant teachers." Thus the Council of Ephesus is cited by Vincenzo Lirineno in the amazing little book *Against Profane Innovations*.

Add to that, as we have long said, in those things whose knowledge does not pertain to the people, the faith of the Church is the faith of the fathers. Since, therefore, it is not up to the common people to receive a true and sincere understanding from Holy Scripture (unless we wish to follow the madness of the Lutherans), the understanding of our fathers on the sacred Scriptures is certainly the very understanding of the Church.

Wherefore, if all the ancient saints erred in understanding the sacred Scriptures, the Church doubtless erred, and did so by God's command. For the people would sin if they opposed the Scriptures, expounded according to the meaning of all the saints, especially in those whose judgment does not concern the lay people, but their elders.

Furthermore, the word of God could not depart from all the saints who were of one and the same mind, thinking the same thing. That is, that all of them together could not hold some book as canonical, which was not canonical, or else, by common consent, their agreement in the matter would itself be canonical [and yet false]. Therefore, neither could the true understanding of the word of God depart from them at the same time. For both the Spirit and the Word were promised to the Church: and if either had been lacking to all the holy doctors, the Church would be equally lacking. But that which was assumed in the former place, if it is not understood, can be perceived from other dogmas of faith: in which we are going to show with great arguments that all the saints cannot err at the same time relatively soon; but a few things must be said first. That both the Word and the Spirit of intelligence are united in the Church, as we assumed in the latter place, the Lord testifies in these words through Isaiah: "My spirit that is in thee, and my words



that I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed...from henceforth and forever.” But no one who has been even a little learned in the sacred scriptures will deny that the Church is the seed of Christ's faithful. Who, then, dares to separate by error the things joined together by Christ in the Church, and to take away either the word or the sense of the word from all the saints and therefore from the Church?

Furthermore, as Jerome says in his commentary on the first chapter of Galatians, “Have the churches throughout the world received a divine or a human gospel? ...those [saints] do not themselves teach so much as God teaches through them and says to them, ‘I have spoken: You are gods and all of you are sons of the Most High.’ ...those who are gods deliver a divine rather than a human gospel. Marcion, Basilides, and the other heretical plagues do not possess the Gospel of God because they do not have the Holy Spirit, and without the Spirit the Gospel that is taught ceases to be divine.” Thus Jerome, and immediately after that, he says, “We should not suppose that the essence of the Gospel is in the words rather than in the actual meaning of Scripture, or on the surface rather than in the inmost parts, or in the leaves of mere words rather than in the root of reason...The devil also speaks about Scripture, and all the heresies, according to Ezekiel, take material from it and sew together pillows which they place under the elbow of every age...Great harm is done to the church when by means of some per verse interpretation the Gospel of Christ turns into the gospel of man—or, what is worse, the gospel of the devil.”

If the faithful received a false sense of Scripture from the holy and ancient successors of the Apostles, they certainly did not receive the gospel of God, which is not in the words of the Scriptures, but in the sense; not in the inert letter, but in the life-giving spirit; not on the surface, but in the heart. This is what not only Jerome, but also Hilary in his book to Constantius Augustus handed down. And if the law is spiritual, and needs the spirit to be understood, which we have already abundantly shown in the first place, how is it possible that sane men say that the Holy Spirit was present in them alone, and that it was lacking in all the saints?

For, so that our discourse may flow from divine to human reasons, if anything in the interpretation of Scripture is attributed to intelligence and learning, what is more acute or perceptive than the genius of the Greeks? What is more practiced in the sacred Scriptures? Nor did the Latin saints lack talent, nor did they lack expertise in sacred literature. For we do not wish to place either the Latins above the Greeks or the Greeks above the Latins. Both are distinguished by their valuable talent and learning. But if in this judgment the holiness of life is more regarded, what modern man can surpass those ancient guides of the church? They tell the truth.

But, of course, they were men. We must not forget, though, that these novice interpreters are men too. I hear it asked: what does a multitude do to the sense of the spirit? I answer: what does a few do? But even in those things which are believed by faith among men, a multitude of witnesses,

especially elders, is wont to do something. For they are the oldest and it is proper that they are the most serious. But to the younger, like children, if they bring forth the appearance of truth, it is not indeed to be rejected immediately; yet antiquity is to be preserved in its place. For antiquity has the greatest force and authority, and where it competes with novelty, it is undoubtedly to be preferred. But I know not how our discourse has slipped from the most serious reasons to these lighter ones. Now let us return to them, and conclude them presently.

Therefore, we are pressing more urgently and importantly to him who affirms that all the ancient saints in the universe erred in expounding any one place of sacred Scripture that he attributes this very error to the Catholic Church. That can also be confirmed by this argument: for wherever the body of the Church is, there is also the spirit of truth, as Irenaeus teaches, and our Lord Jesus Christ also, saying, "I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever, the spirit of truth." Paul also teaches the same openly in Ephesians 4 and 1 Corinthians 12.

But the Spirit which is in the Body does not attribute the same functions to all the parts of the Body, as the Apostle teaches most elegantly in Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12. "To one indeed, by the Spirit, is given the word of wisdom...to another, prophecy...to another, interpretation of speeches," etc. For not all are apostles in the Church, nor all prophets, nor do all interpret, etc. It is certain, however, that the understanding of the sacred letters was given especially to the holy doctors by the Spirit. Therefore, whoever denies the Spirit of truth to all the saints in the interpretation of the sacred Scripture, without a doubt takes away the same Spirit of the Church. Just as he who takes away the gift of seeing from the eyes, here also obscures all the other parts of the body. For if the eye is not able to see clearly, "thy whole body shall be darksome."

And these are the most serious reasons for the fifth conclusion. For there may be others that are lighter. Certainly the example of the best and wisest fathers is not altogether light, though. They who, although they were of the keenest intellect, yet they relate the interpretations of the Holy Scriptures in such a way that they appear to have learned them from their elders, not to have discovered them of their own accord. To which law we ought not to be taught, but do; not instructed, but imbued. Enough has been said about the fifth conclusion.

Sixth conclusion: all the saints cannot err together in the dogma of faith.

This is first shown by Saint Augustine, in his first book, second chapter of *Adversus Iulianum*. For when Julian wished to prevail in the controversy about a dogma of the faith by the testimonies of the saints, Augustine responds, saying, "Indeed, I do not promise that I will gather the opinions of all on this matter, nor all the opinions of those whom I shall mention; it would take too long and I do not think it necessary. But I shall cite a very few, by which, however, our adversaries may be compelled to blush and to yield, if they have any fear of God or shame before

men that can overcome that great evil of their obstinacy.” And later, he says, “There are other matters on which at times even the most learned and excellent defenders of the Catholic rule do not agree, without breaking the bond of the faith, and one speaks better and more truly about one thing and another about another. But this matter about which we are now speaking pertains to the very foundations of the faith.” And in his second book in the same work, he says, “and this we have proved by the authority of Catholic saints who assert what we say...therefore, it does not follow that this is false because those are true. Indeed, such great men according to the Catholic faith, which of old was spread throughout the world, confirm the truth both of this and of those; and so your fragile and, as it were, oversubtle novelty is crushed by their authority alone, in addition to what they say, so that truth itself bears witness that it is speaking through them. But now your obstinacy must first be checked by their authority, and checked in your presumptuous attack, and in some way wounded, so that when you finally believe that such men of God could not commit such an error in the Catholic faith...you may restrain your headlong boldness.”

And further down, “Such judges within the Church of God, and that not without an opponent representing the other side, your teacher Pelagius succeeded in finding. From this judgment he himself, so far as concerns the opinion of men, came forth cleared, but your teaching was openly condemned. But wherever you are, wherever you may read this, I place you, deep within your heart, before these men whom I have constituted judges, not my advocates in this our debate, since they are not my friends and your enemies and in any way prejudiced in my favor or prejudiced against you because of your offense. And I have not, with empty imagining, invented such persons as have never existed and do not exist, or whose teachings on the matter about which we are arguing are uncertain, but holy bishops famous in the holy Church, and I have quoted them by name as was fitting, men versed in sacred Scripture, not in Platonic or Aristotelian or Stoic or other such studies, either Greek or Latin—although some of them were that, also. And I have arranged their doctrines as seemed sufficient to me, expressed without any ambiguity, that in them you may fear not themselves but Him who made them useful vessels for Himself, and holy temples; and they then judged the case when no one can say they were wrongly prejudiced for or against anyone. Certainly, you yourself said that all judges ought to be free from hatred, friendship, enmity and anger. Few such could be found, but we must believe that Ambrose and the others, his colleagues, whom we mentioned with him were of this calibre. But even if they were not so in the cases brought before them for trial during their lifetime and on which they passed judgment, they were so in this case, for they were involved in no friendship or enmity with us or with you; they were not angry at either of us, they felt no pity for either of us. What they found in the Church they held; what they learned they taught; what they received from the fathers they handed down to the sons. We were not as yet involved with you before these judges; they tried our case. Neither we nor you were known to them; we recite their judgments delivered in our favor against you. We were not as yet contending with you; we were victorious by their pronouncements.”

And after, he says, “Has the long day so confounded the highest with the lowest, and shall darkness be called light and light darkness to such an extent that Pelagius, Celestius, and Julian see, and Hilary, Gregory, and Ambrose are blind? But whatever kind of man you are, yet, because you are a man, I think that I sense your feeling of shame (if, indeed, all hope of health is not dead in you) and, after a fashion, hear your voice. You answer: ‘Far be it from me either to think or to call those men blind.’”

And last, at the end of the book, he testifies that those who reject the saints reject the entire Church of Christ. And Vincent of Lerins says, “it is incumbent on all Catholics who are anxious to approve themselves genuine sons of Mother Church, to adhere henceforward to the holy faith of the holy Fathers, to be wedded to it, to die in it; but as to the profane novelties of profane men — to detest them, abhor them, oppose them, give them no quarter...[the decisions of the] Council of Ephesus, that is, the decisions of the holy bishops of almost the whole East, who decreed, under divine guidance, that nothing ought to be believed by posterity save what the sacred antiquity of the holy Fathers, consentient in Christ, had held.”

Nor was Ephesus the only place, as Constantinople also says, in the Sixth Act, “and the holy synod said: It is absolutely necessary not only to follow the dogmas of the holy fathers according to their meaning, but to use the same words with them, and not to innovate anything at all.” And again, “the churches accept the dogmas of the holy fathers as the law of God.” Nor does it matter that these are the opinions of Sergius, not of the synod, since if the heretic Sergius himself, overcome by the common consent of the Church, could not deny this conclusion of ours, certainly our enemies can be constituted as judges of this matter. Thus, the synod in its 17th and 19th Acts followed the holy fathers themselves as a rule. And the Fifth Lateran Council under Martin V, in canons 12 and 13, says that the Catholic and Apostolic Church rejects whatever all the Fathers of the Church reject in unison, and whatever they believe, so too does it believe. This can be confirmed not only by the most weighty testimonies of Augustine and Vincent and the councils, but also by the most invincible arguments.

For if the saints were false in any dogma of faith, the people who followed them would also have been false. For it is clear that the Christian people before us acquiesced to the faith of the holy fathers. He could not have faith in Jesus otherwise, unless he also had faith in his saints. As Paul says to Philemon, “I give thanks to my God...hearing of that...which thou hast in the Lord Jesus and towards all the saints.” Upon which Jerome comments, “whoever has believed in God is not able to receive faith in him in any other manner than if he believes also in his saints. For love and faith in God are not perfect, when they are weakened by ill will and unbelief in his servants.”

Furthermore, although it is often said, it must nevertheless be said more often, as the common people are completely ignorant of it: if all the saints had been deceived in believing in things pertaining to faith, the Church would certainly have been deceived. In addition, if the faith of all

the saints had been rejected, the traditions of Christ and the Apostles would be largely rejected. For we have not recognized most of the Apostolic traditions more clearly than from the testimonies of the ancient saints. Hence in the seventh Ecumenical Council, Act 1, seventh anathema of Basil the Penitent, it is held that, “those who despise the teachings of the holy fathers and the tradition of the Catholic Church, and those who invoke and boast the words of Arius, Nestorius, Eutyches and Dioscorus, saying that, as being sufficiently instructed from the Old and New Testaments, we do not need to follow the traditions of the holy fathers and the Catholic Church, anathema.” These two, therefore, are so connected and joined together that they cannot be separated or dissociated: the doctrine of the holy fathers and the tradition of the Church.

Whoever attempts to undermine one of these must necessarily shake the faith of the other also. In the proceedings of the same synod, Act 6, Epiphanius in his fifth book says thus for the synod: “if he who published this exposition against venerable images asserts that it was not received by the holy fathers who flourished around those times, how can we, who are unworthy to be called their disciples, receive those things which the holy fathers did not approve?” Not only this synod, but all the other councils, all the pontiffs and holy doctors, have refuted all heresies in this way and by this reasoning. For they could not conveniently do otherwise, unless they had held to the opinion of the fathers, as they had received it, both in the canonical scriptures themselves and in the other decrees of faith. On this subject, I would like to fully support the words of Vincent of Lerins, who says, “...the several rantings of error might be crushed by the authority of hallowed antiquity. Nor is there anything new in this? For it has always been the case in the Church, that the more a man is under the influence of religion, so much the more prompt is he to oppose innovations. Examples there are without number: but to be brief, we will take one...so that it may be clearer than day to every one with how great energy, with how great zeal, with how great earnestness, the blessed successors of the blessed apostles have constantly defended the integrity of the religion which they have once received...For that holy and prudent man well knew that true piety admits no other rule than that whatsoever things have been faithfully received from our fathers the same are to be faithfully consigned to our children; and that it is our duty, not to lead religion whither we would, but rather to follow religion whither it leads; and that it is the part of Christian modesty and gravity not to hand down our own beliefs or observances to those who come after us, but to preserve and keep what we have received from those who went before us.” Thus him.

He gives us the same principal example of the thing he had said from the Council of Ephesus, where, when the question of the sacred rules of faith against Nestorius was being debated, it was decreed that the opinions of the holy fathers should be brought forward. When this was done, Nestorius was condemned as contrary to the ancient catholic tradition, and Cyril was approved as being in accordance with the sacred antiquity. But, as he himself said, “examples are all around us.”

This is how Jerome refutes the dogma of Helvidius. This is how Basil asserted the divinity of the Holy Spirit to Amphilochius. This is how Augustine refuted the Donatists and Pelagians. This is how Paul of Samosata was overcome by a certain celebrated writer. This is how Theodoret verified the definitions made at the council of Alexandria. This is how Pope Leo confounded Eutyches and his followers in the presence of the emperor, and thus instructed that none but the impious and heretics should disagree with the agreement of the holy fathers. This is how Pope Agatho confirmed the ecclesiastical dogma of the twofold will and operation of Christ, namely, by the consenting testimonies of the holy doctors. To which the heretics thought they could only answer by claiming that they had corrupted the books, and so they brought other testimonies from the same saints, either mutilated or even fabricated, in confirmation of their error. For it did not seem proper to the heretics to deny the authority of the saints in its entirety. But why should we now bring forward newer examples to follow older ones? From Bernard, Epistle 77, to Hugo, from Innocent, On Presbyters not Baptized, from the Council of Florence, and also many others, of whom, lest we rattle on and on, we shall end for the present.

It is enough for us, if we have made any progress in Christian philosophy, to be convinced by examples, reasons, and testimonies, that the common sense of all the saints makes a certain belief in Catholic dogmas, and therefore, from the authority of all, certain arguments must be brought forward to confirm theological conclusions.

Thus we establish in the sixth place. But we have had to prove this through a long discourse, for how could we explain so great a matter in fewer words? Yet, this has been said so clearly that the darkness which the adversaries of the truth have tried to cast over them with their arguments seems to have already been dispelled by the light of the previous discussion. Certainly the first, second and third arguments need no response after what has been said. But not even the last argument holds any weight after what has been said. For it holds no more against the ancient saints than against all the Fathers of the Councils and so against the whole Church. Thus we have previously refuted it in two places.

Therefore, only the scruples of Osiander and Cajetan remain, which, aside from them, there is certainly nothing more to be desired in explaining the sixth place of theology.

## CHAPTER 4

When, therefore, Osiander contends that all expositors, from the apostles on, have erred in the understanding of that prophecy on Hosea 11, he really brings nothing to our attention that contradicts it. For, as Vincent of Lerins rightly said, “concerning this ancient consent of the holy Fathers we are to bestow our pains not on every minor question of the Divine Law, but only, at all events especially, where the Rule of Faith is concerned.” This we have also explained

somewhat more fully in the previous chapter. So, whether the prophecy of Hosea is to be referred to Christ in a literal or allegorical sense, it does not concern a matter of faith. Thus, even if the saints were wrong in this, they would have been wrong not in a grave matter, but in one that is of little importance to the Church.

Next, it is false that all authors, from the Apostles onward, have applied that passage to Christ in a purely allegorical sense. They all claim that it refers to the people of Israel and to Christ, but not all assert that it is done allegorically. Indeed, some of those authors affirm that the same passage in Scripture sometimes has several literal senses. Lastly, if we say that the sense is allegorical, there is no error. We may agree with Jerome, in his commentary on Hosea, who responds intelligently to the objection of Osiander. Therefore, this vain argument is valid only among those who wish to deceive and mislead themselves.

Those men should be warned more seriously and more consistently, so that they may take heed lest they be taken in by some ingenious reasoning. For no one sees a sophist clearly claiming to be a sophist, unless he is very uneducated. Therefore, a man must be diligently guarded against a cunning and hidden sophist, lest that sophist deceive him with the appearance of truth. Such a sophist is not easily recognized. Nor would I wish to think that Cajetan should be reckoned among the sophists, or that he wished to deceive anyone with sly, cunning, or malicious intent. However, a clever and learned man would not be deceived unless by some sort of particular, obscure reasoning. This is why, since a learned man has greater power than others to deceive, he must be guarded against with greater care and diligence.

Cajetan argues thus: “God did not bind the interpretation of the sacred Scriptures to the opinions of the Doctors,” etc. On the contrary, it is truly binding, should all of them agree in one opinion. All Catholics are bound to follow this unanimous opinion, as it would be held as the opinion of the Catholic Church. And this thesis, that the sense of all of the doctors of the Church form the true opinion of the Church, was sufficiently and carefully explained earlier. Nor does the Church now judge about the meaning of the Scriptures by some sort of divination, but rather she interprets them from the tradition of our fathers. For just as, if any other question of faith arises, the judgment of the Church brings nothing new to the ears of the Christian people, but both inquires into and follows the ancient faith of our fathers in that matter, so when there is any controversy about the meaning of the sacred Scriptures, we should expect no new understanding from the ecclesiastical judgment, but that which, after great inquiry, has been established to be the common understanding of our fathers.

They say, “the hope of explaining the sacred writings is taken away from us and posterity, relegated to simply transcribing words from one book to another.” But this is not so for the people. Now, (passing over those places, of which there are many in the sacred Scriptures, even able to fill some books, wherein the Church desires careful interpretation, and thus in which

younger men of erudition and learning can also leave their marks to those who come after), even in those places which the ancients have carefully and ingeniously interpreted, we can do something for the Christian people, if we want to perform a particularly useful deed. We can thus give new to the old, refresh the worn out, shine light on the obscure, give grace to the scorned, faith to the doubtful, give all their nature, and give nature to all.

But to this argument of Cajetan, Vincent of Lerins (ever the elegant doctor) responds. We will write his words, certainly worthy of being written in golden letters. He says, “O Timothy! O Priest! O Expositor! O Doctor! If the divine gift has qualified you by wit, by skill, by learning, be a Bazaleel of the spiritual tabernacle, engrave the precious gems of divine doctrine, fit them in accurately, adorn them skilfully, add splendor, grace, beauty. Let that which formerly was believed, though imperfectly apprehended, as expounded by you be clearly understood. Let posterity welcome, understood through your exposition, what antiquity venerated without understanding. Yet teach still the same truths which you have learned, so that though you speak after a new fashion, what you speak may not be new. But someone will say, perhaps, Shall there, then, be no progress in Christ's Church? Certainly; all possible progress. For what being is there, so envious of men, so full of hatred to God, who would seek to forbid it? Yet on condition that it be real progress, not alteration of the faith. For progress requires that the subject be enlarged itself, alteration, that it be transformed into something else. The intelligence, then, the knowledge, the wisdom, as well of individuals as of all, as well of one man as of the whole Church, ought, in the course of ages and centuries, to increase and make much and vigorous progress; but yet only in its own kind; that is to say, in the same doctrine, in the same sense, and in the same meaning. The growth of religion in the soul must be analogous to the growth of the body, which, though in process of years it is developed and attains its full size, yet remains still the same...An infant's limbs are small, a young man's large, yet the infant and the young man are the same. Men when full grown have the same number of joints that they had when children; and if there be any to which maturer age has given birth these were already present in embryo, so that nothing new is produced in them when old which was not already latent in them when children. This, then, is undoubtedly the true and legitimate rule of progress, this the established and most beautiful order of growth, that mature age ever develops in the man those parts and forms which the wisdom of the Creator had already framed beforehand in the infant...In like manner, it behooves Christian doctrine to follow the same laws of progress, so as to be consolidated by years, enlarged by time, refined by age, and yet, withal, to continue uncorrupt and unadulterate, complete and perfect in all the measurement of its parts, and, so to speak, in all its proper members and senses, admitting no change, no waste of its distinctive property, no variation in its limits.”

And a little later, he says, “Therefore, whatever has been sown by the fidelity of the Fathers in this husbandry of God's Church, the same ought to be cultivated and taken care of by the industry of their children, the same ought to flourish and ripen, the same ought to advance and go



forward to perfection. For it is right that those ancient doctrines of heavenly philosophy should, as time goes on, be cared for, smoothed, polished; but not that they should be changed, not that they should be maimed, not that they should be mutilated. They may receive proof, illustration, definiteness; but they must retain withal their completeness, their integrity, their characteristic properties.”

Thus Vincent. His whole speech seems to me to be much more probable, since it seems to have been taken from the Apostle in Ephesians 4, where he pursued that analogy of bodily growth so openly and abundantly, so that there is no need of any speech of mine. Thus the readers are admonished to listen.

So much for the sixth place. Now let us pass to the seventh, that is, the authority of the Scholastics. And, although perhaps I am about to say something new, yet I trust it will be approved by pious readers.



